

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 19 August 2019 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr J Bruce  
Mrs M Cockburn (VC)

Ms P Hadley  
Mr B Lobban

### In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office  
Chief Inspector B MacKay, Police Scotland  
Inspector V Tough, Police Scotland  
Mr A McCann, Economy & Regeneration Manager, Development & Infrastructure  
Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager, Community Services  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager - LNBS, Community Services  
Mr E Boyd, Energy & Sustainability Manager, Development & Infrastructure  
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager, Development & Infrastructure  
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

### Also in attendance:

Mr G Miles, Head of Planning and Communities, Cairngorms National Park Authority (Item 3)

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.**

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

### Business

#### 1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 3 – Ms P Hadley (financial)  
Item 9 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

**3. Cairngorms National Park (CNP) Action Plan 2019-2022  
Plana Gnìomha Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh 2019–2022**

**Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the Cairngorm National Park Authority Board but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to take part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**10**/19 dated 31 July 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure. The report was supported by a presentation from Mr Gavin Miles, Head of Planning at the Cairngorms National Park Authority during which he advised that five key themes had been set with the aim of achieving a sustainable economy to support thriving businesses and communities. The five key themes were Building on economic strengths of the Park; Supporting and attracting businesses; Education, training and skills development; Infrastructure and capital investment; and Community and enterprise. Further information was provided on the planned actions pertaining to each theme.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Assurance was sought and provided that steps had been taken in preparation of mitigating the potential impacts of BREXIT, particularly in regard to land management and the impact of subsidies on the local rural economy;
- There was a need to address the lack of affordable housing in the park area particularly for key workers who were critical to servicing the local businesses that were paramount to the economic vision of park. Although the need for short term housing lets was recognised, the level of demand for visitor beds was so high that there were circumstances whereby local hotels were considering converting staff accommodation for this purpose which would further exacerbate this shortage. The level of homelessness, even amongst affluent people, was increasing therefore further information was sought how the Action Plan could assist with these key local issues;
- It was queried whether the CNP had given any consideration to developing and implementing innovative methods of electric transport;
- Concern was expressed and assurance sought as to whether sufficient emphasis was being placed on economic development and it was suggested that there should be greater focus on this within the finalised Plan; and
- There had been a strong drive to create business in the park and further information was requested on the number of new business start-ups directed into the park area by Business Gateway.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the:-
  - a. draft responses to the questions as detailed in section 5 of the report;
  - b. Badenoch and Strathspey Area submission to the Cairngorm National Park Economic Action Plan 2019 - 2022; and

- ii. **AGREED** that further information be provided to Councillor J Bruce on the number of new business start-ups directed into the CNP area by Business Gateway.

*In accordance with Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, Item 5 on the agenda was taken at this point.*

## **5. Annual Area Capital Report Aithisg Bhliadhnaì Chalpa Sgìre**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/12/19 dated 6 August 2019 by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- disappointment was expressed that a representative from the Corporate Resources Service was not in attendance at the meeting. The Chair indicated that submission of reports to Committee was futile if a representative from the Service did not attend the meeting to directly respond to questions from Members;
- it was recommended that relevant local communities, particularly with regard to schools, affected by the capital projects that would not be progressed within the first six months of the financial year be notified;
- further information was sought on the reason for the delays with the new housing building development in Kingussie; and
- it was indicated that a progress update on the Castle Road East project would be provided to the next Ward Business meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the:-
  - a. expenditure on each project in this Council area in 2018/19;
  - b. budget for each project in this Council area in 2019/20;
  - c. cumulative spend for each project in this Council area for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to 30 June 2019; and
- ii. **AGREED** that:-
  - a. the relevant communities affected by the capital projects that would not be progressed within the first six months of the financial year be notified; and
  - b. further information be provided to Councillor P Hadley on the reason for the delays with the new housing building development in Kingussie.

#### 4. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/11/19 dated 31 July 2019 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried when the new driver drug testing kits would be in practice and the date for this would be reported back to Committee;
- The Committee was advised that the Rural Police Officer had made a presentation to the Board of the Cairngorms National Park Authority explaining how rural crimes were often interlinked to more serious organised crime. It was explained that this had been most informative and having this additional knowledge enabled better scrutiny and understanding of the local performance report and in view of this it was recommended that the presentation should be extended to all Members;
- Although the reduction in speeding offences was welcome, further information was sought and provided on reasons for this as it was indicated that the majority of community complaints related to speeding within 20 and 30 mile per hour zones;
- It was queried whether Police Scotland liaised with the agricultural industry with regard to slow moving vehicles and ensuring best practice to reduce frustration and dangerous driving and also whether an education programme was available for these drivers on how to reduce tailbacks. Similarly, it was highlighted that long tailbacks also occurred as the result of caravans and campervans travelling in convoy and preventing other vehicles with the opportunity to overtake safely and it was queried how this was addressed/prevented;
- Further information was sought and provided on the reason for the reduction on checks of licensed premises; and
- The Committee expressed their appreciation for the increased level of local Police presence which had been helpful with crime prevention and welcomed the technological advancements which had enabled this.

#### The Committee

- i. **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-2020 Year 2 and first quarter of Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2018- 30 June 2019; and
- ii. **AGREED** to report back on:-
  - a. the date driver drug testing kits would be implemented;
  - b. the feasibility of extending the presentation by the Rural Police Officer made to the Board of the Cairngorms National Park Authority to all Members to help better understand how crimes were interlinked; and
  - c. whether an education programme was available for drivers of slow-moving vehicles on how to reduce tailbacks.

**6. Area Roads & Bridges Progress Report 2018/19  
Aithisg Adhartais Rathaidean & Dhrochaidean Sgìreil 2018/19**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**13**/19 dated 23 July 2019 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services)

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In response to a question, it was highlighted that the Broomhill bridge, which was an old timber structure, at Nethybridge was of most concern. The Committee supported these concerns, particularly in regard to the poor quality signage which was resulting in vehicles which exceeded the weight limit frequently using the bridge. The Committee urged that the signage be replaced as a matter of urgency; and
- Although improvement works to electrical transmission lines were welcome it was requested that local communities and Councillors be informed of road closures taking place to facilitate these works.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

**7. Winter Maintenance Plan 2019/20  
Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**14**/19 dated 29 July 2019 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further information was sought and provided in regard to how the budget allocation was determined and how any shortfall in budget projections would be covered in the event of an extreme winter. It was emphasised that it was the responsibility of Members to ensure that Community Services had an adequately resourced budget to provide the services required to meet local needs;
- Further information was sought and provided on the flood prevention arrangements that were in place and confirmation was also provided that the flood risks areas had been identified and allocated a RAG status. It was highlighted that it was recommended that Community Councils have a Resilience Plan which should include a section on flooding and it was suggested that the Council should work collaboratively with them and other community groups to maximise community resilience; and
- It was confirmed that a pre-wet salt would be utilised as this was more effective and also environmentally friendly.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Badenoch & Strathspey Area, which was in accordance with report EDI/57/18, and included the priority road map presented in Appendix B to the report.

**8. Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme  
Alba Lùth Èifeachdach: Sgeama Stèidhichte air Sgìre**

There was a presentation on the Energy Efficient Scotland Programme by the Energy and Sustainability Manager which included details on the Scottish Government programme Energy Efficient Scotland to encourage and support property owners to improve their buildings. The Highland Council had been awarded funding to deliver area based energy efficiency programmes in the Highlands and further information was provided on the scheme eligibility criteria and implementation. The Committee was advised that the Badenoch and Strathspey Ward had been assessed and met the requirements for the critical aspects of the programme in terms of fuel poverty and house type and it was therefore proposed that the scheme be rolled out across the Ward.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Committee enthusiastically welcomed the roll out of the scheme across Badenoch and Strathspey and recognised the significant improvements that this could make to property owners;
- There were many people living in fuel poverty in properties which were Council Tax Band D and above and assurance was provided that, although they would not be eligible for the Area Based Scheme, alternative methods of support were available for these property owners and it was recommended that this information should be promoted as part of the roll out of the scheme;
- Assurance was provided that all materials used had passed the appropriate health and safety and Building Control checks;
- Further information was sought and provided on the types of monetary savings that could be achieved;
- With regard to ascertaining local contacts to promote awareness and ensure maximum access to the scheme, it was suggested that further information could be sought from the third sector and major energy companies on home owners living in fuel poverty and it was also recommended that contact should be made with Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey and Community Councils; and
- In terms of rented properties, it was clarified that referrals had to be made by the property owner and not the tenant.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation on the Energy Efficient Scotland Programme by the Energy and Sustainability Manager and **APPROVED** the roll out the scheme to the Badenoch and Strathspey Ward, which had been assessed and met the critical aspects of fuel poverty and house type requirements of the programme.

**9. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019  
Coileanadh Taigheadais: 1 Giblean 2019 gu 30 Ògmhios 2019**

**Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained in the room to participate in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/15/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Staff were commended for their work and the excellent work which had resulted in improved performance;
- Concern was expressed at the impact of Universal Credit and the increasing level of homelessness particularly amongst affluent people. Although the local area was supported by a tourist economy, there was a need to balance this to ensure there was affordable housing to meet local needs;
- Further advice was sought and provided in regard to providing additional support for homelessness such as Housing of Multiple Occupation as well as developing new innovative solutions;
- It was indicated that the level of private rental properties on the market was reducing and it was queried whether this had been an unintended consequence of the implementation of the new Private Tenancy Agreement; and
- It was requested that work be undertaken to progress the two amber HRA Capital programme projects contained within Appendix 2 of the report to a green RAG status by the end of the year.

The Committee **NOTED** the housing performance for the period 1 April to 30 June 2019 and **AGREED** to endeavour to progress the two amber HRA Capital programme projects contained within Appendix 2 of the report to a green RAG status by the end of the year.

## 10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 20 May 2019 which had been approved by the Council on 27 June 2019.

The meeting was closed at 12.22 pm.